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WCC Calls For End to Killings in Angola

(Geneva) - The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches has called upon the government of Portugal to "refrain from deliberate action involving the death and maiming of thousands of Africans" in Angola.

The statement, one of the strongest ever issued by the committee, declared that Portugal "will inevitably forfeit the sympathy and respect of other nations" if it continues its present policy.

The committee is the interim policy-making group for the WCC, which has 176 member churches of the Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox confessions in more than 50 countries.

The statement "deplores the mounting evidence of a rapidly deteriorating situation" and appeals to the government "in the name of humanity and of the Christian principles so long professed in Portugal" to change its methods.

It says that the attacks are particularly directed to those with education and gifts of leadership. Further it says they involve women and children and widespread destruction of property.

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It reaffirms the statement issued early in June by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs calling for recognition of the legitimate rights of the people of Angola to determine their own political future. The Commission is a joint agency of the WCC and the International Missionary Council. (See EPS No. 21)

It asks the Commission to make representations to the Portuguese government and to the UN Commission appointed to investigate conditions.

It also calls upon WCC member churches "of whose deep concern it has been made aware, to press upon their governments the urgency of the situation". (See complete text of statement appended.)

The situation spurred other church groups to action last week.

In Great Britain a deputation of leaders of the British Council of Churches visited Lord Home, the Foreign Secretary, to express mounting Christian concern over events, which a BCC spokesman estimated had caused more outspoken reaction by member churches than "any other issue for years".

Earlier the Standing Committee of the Conference of British Missionary Societies, in association with the Council, had sent to Lord Home a statement declaring that "the United Kingdom is forfeiting the confidence of the peoples of Africa ... by appearing to acquiesce in the policy of the Portuguese Government in Angola". It called upon the United Kingdom government to "take positive action through the United Nations and in other appropriate ways to seek to prevent further tragedy".

In Canada a delegation of church leaders asked Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs to urge the government to use its influence to "bring an immediate end to the excessive punitive action" by the Portuguese government.

Meanwhile reports of increasing bloodshed continued. Official reports say that so far 1,200 Portuguese and 8,000 Angolans have lost their lives, but private sources put the toll among Angolans as high as 40,000.

Refugees continued to stream across the border into the Congo. An estimated 80,000 refugees are now in the border areas, some of them suffering from burns and most needing food and blankets. The World Council of Churches, which is one of the three agencies carrying on an extensive relief programme, has sent its inter-church aid administrative secretary, the Rev. William DuVal, to the area to investigate what further help can be provided. The Red Cross and the Catholic Church also have assistance programmes.

EPS, Geneva

IMC-WCC Integration Scheduled At First Assembly Session

(Geneva) - A major step forward in the search for Christian unity is expected to be taken in the opening session of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, November 18 - December 6, in New Delhi, India. The Assembly theme is "Jesus Christ - the Light of the World".

The action will come when delegates of the WCC's 176 member churches are asked to approve plans for the integration of the World Council and the International Missionary Council. The required majority of the IMC's member councils have already approved integration.

The historic event will unite into one organization the two main bodies through which the search for unity has been crystallized in this generation. The IMC issued from the famous Edinburgh conference of 1910. The WCC came into being in 1948.

The long-range effect of the action will be an intensification of the concern for the Church's missionary task in the programme of the World Council through which member churches of the Anglican, Orthodox, Old Catholic and Protestant confessions, representing a large majority of the world's non-Roman Catholic Christians, carry on cooperative work.

Its immediate practical effect will be to integrate the work of the IMC's 35 national Christian councils and national missionary councils into the organizational framework of the WCC as the Division of World Mission and Evangelism.

Following the vote on integration the Assembly will be conducted as an Assembly of the two integrated bodies.

Plans for the historic ceremony were approved by the WCC's policy-making Executive Committee at a meeting here.

The session scheduled for Sunday afternoon, November 19, will open with addresses by Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council, who will speak on "The Calling of the World Council of Churches" and by Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, general secretary of the IMC, who will speak on "The Missionary Dimension of the Ecumenical Movement".

Dr. Christian Baeta, of Ghana, IMC chairman, will then report to the Assembly on the action giving approval to integration by IMC member councils and its Administrative Committee. This will be followed by a report of the resolution approving integration by the WCC's Central Committee to be given by Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, New York, chairman.

There will then be action by WCC delegates on the resolution. The expected affirmative vote will be followed by the seating of 25 additional delegates, named by the churches, in consultation with the IMC, in anticipation of integration. The seating of these will raise the total of official Assembly delegates to 625.

Witnessing the act in addition to official delegates will be some 400 advisers, youth participants, fraternal delegates, observers and guests.

During the 18-day Assembly participants will convene in plenary sessions for speeches on the main theme, and on the sub-themes, "Witness", "Service", and "Unity", as well as for business decisions. They will in addition take part in the study of one of the three sections on the sub-themes and in one of fifteen policy-making committees. Reports of these groups will be presented and acted upon by the Assembly in concluding plenary sessions.

There will also be a series of six evening meetings in which addresses will be given by prominent Christian leaders. Three of these will be open to the public and are expected to attract audiences of several thousand persons.

The Assembly will be the first major meeting of the World Council of Churches in India. Through its sessions it provides the major forum for ecumenical discussion in the movement for Christian unity which came into being a little more than half a century ago. Previous Assemblies have been held in Amsterdam in 1948 where the WCC was constituted, and at Evanston, Ill., (USA), in 1954. EPS, Geneva

WCC Plans 4th World Faith and Order Conference

(Geneva) - A world conference on Faith and Order will be held under the auspices of the World Council of Churches in 1963, probably in July, and possibly in a city in the Middle East.

The conference will bring together 350 theologians and other church leaders from all over the world to discuss the doctrine and organization of the churches and seek ways to bring about Christian unity.

Plans for the conference, the fourth in a series started in 1927, were made during sessions of a three-day meeting here of the 25-member Working Committee of the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order. It will be the first such world conference on the subject since 1952.

A major task of the conference will be the review of reports of four theological commissions which have been working since 1952 in Europe, North America and Asia on the subjects "Christ and the Church", "Worship", "Tradition and the Traditions", and "Institutionalism".

The conference will also receive reports from study groups which will be set up next year in Africa, the Near East, Latin America, East Asia, Europe and North America.

In another session, Dr. Keith Bridston, executive secretary of the Commission, reported on a series of six Faith and Order consultations held recently in the Far East in preparation for a Faith and Order Consultation in November in Bangalore, India.

These consultations, which took place in Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Indonesia, were held under the auspices of the East Asia Christian Conference and the East Asia Theological Commission.

Dr. Bridston told the Committee that the Asian meetings mark the first step in the regional development of the Faith and Order programme. "Although great pioneering steps in church unity have been made in Asia in the past", he said, "up to now Faith and Order has been largely a western enterprise and its theological programme is laregly centred in Europe and America. Now the time has come for the younger churches to make a fresh contribution to the ecumenical discussions on church unity." EPS, Geneva

Dr. Ramsey Urges Christian Unity at Canterbury Enthronement

(London) - Dr. Arthur Michael Ramsey urged members of the Anglican Communion to seek Christian unity as he was enthroned as the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury.

More than 3,000 persons packed Canterbury Cathedral to see Dr. Ramsey enthroned in the marble chair of St. Augustine, which has been used at every enthronement since 1205.

In a brief sermon near the conclusion of the 90-minute service, the new Primate of All England said the Church must reach out in the quest for unity for which Christ is longing; that there would go out with Him, not separated bands of followers, but a united band of all those whose hearts God had touched.

However, Dr. Ramsey noted that Anglicans must also understand that the Church of England is a communion which is reformed and scriptural, yet rejoices in her catholic continuity.

Overseas bishops of the Anglican Communion present at the ceremony included the Archbishop of Jerusalem, and the bishops from New York, Gibraltar, Borneo, Amritsar, Jordan, Sudan and Quincy, Illinois. Also present were bishops of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Antioch, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Old Catholic bishops of the Netherlands. Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, also attended. EPS, Geneva

New Demand for African Literature Forecast

(Kitwe, Northern Rhodesia) - "An immense increase" in the reading public of Africa has been predicted here by Dr. Donald Mtimkulu, general secretary of the All Africa Church Conference.

Speaking to some 80 persons convened here for the All Africa Christian Literature and Audio-Visual Conference, Dr. Mtimkulu forecast a growing demand for Christian literature, particularly by young people. He emphasized that the literature provided for them must be "the right kind for Africa". He outlined three criteria: "1) It must arise from involvement in the situation that exists in Africa today; 2) it must accept the adult stature of the African reader; and 3) it must be linked with the utilitarian interests of the people."

In another session of the 14-day conference (June 17-30) Dr. Wesley Sadler, director of the Kitwe Writing Centre characterized as "bunk" comments that the African languages "are insufficient for the thoughts we wish to portray" or that "they lack beauty and power".

"Our major emphasis", he said, "should be on producing literature in the vernacular for all men and women below university standard". And, he added, "the best literature for Africa will be written by Africans".

Attending the conference, which was held at the Mindolo Ecumenical Centre, were Christian literature experts from 23 African countries and resource persons from 11 countries of Asia, Europe and America.

EPS, Geneva

LWF Executive Cites "Unifying Tendencies"

(Warsaw) - "Unifying tendencies within Christendom have been strengthened to a remarkable degree" in the past year or two, Dr. Kurt Schmidt-Clausen, acting executive secretary of the Lutheran World Federation said here today.

In his official report to the LWF Executive Committee at the opening of its five-day meeting, he cited a number of recent developments showing how Protestants, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox are drawing closer together.

He mentioned particularly the proposed integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council, the "reorganization" of the WCC's Department of Faith and Order, and the fact that preparations for the WCC's Third Assembly "indicate that, with wide support from various circles, there will be an attempt to strengthen efforts for union among the churches".

In another session the Federation's Special Commission on Inter-Confessional Research warned against attempts to foster closer relations between Christian confessions without studying their "deep theological implications". Without such study, it said, "we face the danger that all contacts will lead only to greater disappointments and will serve to widen the chasm that exists between the confessions". EPS, Geneva

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Pope Defines Aims of Vatican Council

(Vatican City) - Pope John XXIII has outlined the aims of the Second Vatican Council in a speech to the Central Preparatory Commission. The speech was notable for the fact that it included only one brief reference to the problems of Christian unity.

The Pontiff said the Council will seek to inspire the clergy, instruct the people in the truths of the faith and Christian morals, provide hope of better times for youth, be concerned for social evangelism and urge all Christians to be missionary at heart.

In reference to unity he asked: "What should we do for our separated brethren whom we love? What should we do for those who do not bear on their foreheads the sign of Christ, but who are nevertheless sons of God? Believe me, our hearts are very responsive to what they are saying and to their courtesy. From this aspect also, the Vatican Council is not a speculative assembly but a living, sensitive body which longs to embrace the whole world in the light of Christ's love. The house is adorned ready for a festival ... it is the Church which invites all men to enter it."

The Pope also referred to the involvement of the laity in preparations. He said that material circulated by the bishops, clergy and through Catholic universities had enabled him "to acquaint ourself fully with the wishes of the priests and Christian people ... so that it is really true to say that full account has been taken of (their) aspirations in preparing for the Council".

The Pope said, in conclusion, that the official language of the Vatican Council will be Latin, but on certain occasions, and in case of necessity, everyone will be able to speak in his own language.

At a press conference Monseigneur Pericle Felici, the general secretary of the Central Preparatory Commission for the Vatican Council, said that the question of non-Catholic observers has not yet been tackled, although suggestions have been made about this. The question will probably be discussed at the next meeting of the Central Commission. EPS, Geneva

United Presbyterians Sever Cuban Ties

(Philadelphia) - The United Presbyterian Church (USA) will no longer maintain a school system in Cuba, according to Dr. Kenneth G. Neigh, general secretary of the denomination's Board of National Missions.

"The 'intervention' of the Cuban government and its assumption of the direction of La Progresiva, the boarding school at Cardenas, and 13 other day schools on the island, has made it necessary for the Board of National Missions reluctantly to sever all its ties with the schools", Dr. Neigh said.

While 127 teachers will be affected by the move, the board has been advised that over 90% of them will continue as employees of the government.

"We cannot contemplate this radical change without sorrow, not at the loss of the schools because they are not lost to the Cuban people, but that the church has been deprived of this means to serve the children and youth on the island", Dr. Neigh said,

However, he commented that the board was "heartened" by repeated messages from Cuba that the churches are continuing their worship and Christian education programmes "without hindrance". Medical work is also being continued with full support of the Cuban church and the board, he added.

EPS, Geneva

Ground-Breaking Ceremony for New WCC Headquarters

(Geneva) - Some 300 leaders of the ecumenical movement, local civic and church dignitaries and guests met in Geneva last week for the ground-breaking ceremony for the new headquarters building of the World Council of Churches.

Gathered in the shade of a large blue and white striped tent under sunny Geneva skies, the assemblage saw World Council co-president, Protestant Episcopal Bishop Henry Knox Sherrill, Boxford, Mass. (USA), turn over the first symbolic spadeful of earth on the exact site of the chapel in the new building. Construction will begin immediately on the $2,500,000 (Sw. Fr. 10,700,000) structure, expected to be ready for occupancy in mid-1963.

Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, New York, Committee chairman, who presided, described the ground-breaking as both "a culmination and a beginning. What is being done today holds the promise of a better future", he declared. "We enter into that future with confidence that the work ahead will be in accordance with the will of God."

Bishop Sherrill, chairman of the international committee which has raised funds for the building, described it as "a great tribute to the growth of the activities of the World Council" which, he said, "at one time could have been contained under the hat of (General Secretary) Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft. Today", he added, "we have come to the point where new accommodations are required".

Bishop Sherrill took issue in his brief talk with "those who say it is not spiritual to build a building. This seems to me clear nonsense", he declared. "It is not spiritual to use inadequate quarters when we can do so much more adequate work if we have the tools with which to labour."

Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, WCC general secretary, said the building is required because of "an ecumenical population explosion", but that in planning the structure it had been hoped to keep something of the "family atmosphere" of present headquarters.

The new building will contain 250 offices housing, in addition to WCC staff, the staffs of the Geneva offices of the Lutheran World Federation. the World Presbyterian Alliance, the Brethren Service Commission and other WCC-related bodies, which at present total 280. WCC headquarters at present are located in converted chalets with overflow offices in four wooden barracks.

Funds for the building have been raised by member churches and through special appeals in several countries. Of the $2,500,000 total required, $2,200,000 is "completely assured", according to WCC officials.

Plans for the chapel in the new building were approved by the WCC's Executive Committee meeting last week. The chapel will provide permanent seating for 180 persons, with a potential capacity for 400 persons. It will be of rectangular shape, two storeys high, and will be located on the ground floor as an integral part of the main block which will also house the entrance hall, exhibit area and conference rooms. Blueprints call for the altar and cross to be placed before a background design of tinted and stained glass which will be masked from the light of the sun by grill work on the outside wall. A similar grill work in the opposite side will create a unity in the design. Seats will face the altar from three sides. Above the entrance will be a stylized symbol of baptism indicating that all Christians are united in baptism. EPS, Geneva

Peace Corps Ties With Religious Groups Protested

(New York) - Peace Corps officials have received protests from the United Presbyterian Church and the American Jewish Congress against signing overseas contracts with religious groups.

The protests were made after corps officials disclosed that about half of all project work assigned to private voluntary agencies would be carried out by groups having religious ties.

The United Presbyterian Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, while affirming support of the Peace Corps, said it "would betray our position" if government aid were received under the programme. It is the mission of the Church to "proclaim the Gospel", while the aim of the corps is to give personal assistance to underdeveloped countries, it noted.

"These goals may parallel each other, but are not identical", it declared. This distinction must be maintained to affirm our historic belief in the separation of Church and State in the United States and other nations of the world."

The American Jewish Congress also feared that the belief in the separation of Church and State would be violated if religious groups made any use of government funds or Peace Corps personnel in their own projects.

EPS, Geneva

YMCA Leaders to Chart Future Plans at Geneva Meeting

(Geneva) - Vital decisions affecting the world-wide policy of the YMCA will be considered when the organization's World Council meets here July 18-25.

Some 250 persons representing YMCA movements in more than 50 countries will consider four areas of concern, centred around the theme, "Called to New Things". These will be (1) YMCA responsibility in a world of tensions and barriers; (2) the unchanging Gospel for ever-changing youth; (3) Christian unity and the YMCAs; and (4) new concepts and patterns for YMCAs.

Special consideration will be given to the problem of dealing with racial tensions and political blocs.

Similar questions will also be studied as a guide to local and national action by some 150 YMCA leaders from 40 countries, who will attend a conference in Vienna from July 8-14.

Under the theme, "New Horizons", delegates will consider four aspects of modern life: (1) a new bridge between nations and races; (2) a new responsibility in a scientific age; (3) a new spirit between men and women and in family life; and (4) a new witness in work and leisure.

EPS, Geneva

Free Church Transfers Mission Operation to Congolese

(Green Lake) - The Evangelical Free Church of America will place its entire missions operation in the Congo in Congolese hands, the denomination's 77th annual conference was told here.

The Rev. Lester W. Westlund, secretary for foreign missions, told delegates that the transition was planned before the Congo received its independence. In the meantime, he said, the church will continue its missionary work there "without let-up and as long as the door is open".

Twenty-two of the church's missionaries are now on the field, compared to 36 last July when rioting followed independence. Five others are now in the process of returning to the field.

Another US church, The Assemblies of God, announced last week that two of its missionary couples have returned to their work at Paulis and Andudu. Nine other of its missionaries to the Congo are on furlough in the United States, but are expected to return next year. EPS, Geneva

POAU Urged to Cease "Blatant Anti-Catholicism"

(New York) - Leaders of an organization dedicated to preserve the American concept of the separation of church and state have been called upon to bring a halt to their "blatant anti-Catholicism".

The charge was made against Protestants and other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (POAU) in the June 26th issue of Christianity and Crisis, a weekly edited here by some leading Protestant theologians.

The journal charged in an editorial that POAU "insists on judging Catholicism by its worst examples", uses "inflammatory language", and constantly identifies "its own sectarian position as the 'American' position".

"We ask the leaders of POAU to cease and desist from their blatant anti-Catholicism", the editorial said, "and to move beyond the entrenched position of holy war from which they impugn the patriotism of their adversaries and attack any understanding of the American tradition and Protestant Christianity that differs from their own". EPS, Geneva

Holy Office Issues Warning About Bible Study

(Vatican City) - The Vatican's Congregation of the Holy Office has issued a warning against too free interpretations of the Bible because these "gravely endanger the exact historical and objective truth" of the Scriptures.

Although the ardour of some Biblical students is praiseworthy, it said, all those who study and write about the Bible should "exercise great prudence and respect ... and bear in mind constantly the teaching of the early Fathers, and the views of the Church and its leaders" so that they will not "trouble the minds of the faithful, nor injure the truths of the faith". EPS, Geneva

In Brief

St. Michael's College, of the University of Toronto, Canada, will open a Centre of Ecumenical Studies in September to promote theological studies on ecumenicm. The Centre will begin by organizing a specialized library for the study of problems concerning Protestantism, church unity and the ecumenical movement.

* * *

A hard-hitting campaign by Protestant, Roman Catholic, Hindu and Muslim leaders is reported to have been an important factor in the defeat of the Communist party in elections to the Orissa (India) State Legislature. Nine Communists were defeated in bids for re-election to the 140-member Assembly. Four others won by narrow margins. The campaign by the religious leaders deplored the "Marxist atheism" of the Communist candidates and pointed to the threat of Communism to all of India's religions.

* * *

An inscription bearing the name Pontius Pilate has been discovered by Italian archaeologists at the ruins of Caesarea, Jerusalem. The name was engraved on a stone slab measuring fifteen by twenty inches. It is the first archeological evidence of the name, previously known only from the Gospels and the work of the historian Josephus Flavius.

* * *

At least five Roman Catholic priests have been killed or taken prisoner by Communist rebels in Laos, according to reports from Vientiane. Since the first cease-fire in Laos in 1954 at least two other Catholic priests have vanished and one was killed.

* * *

The annual General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada has deferred for another two years action on the problem of the ordination of women. The Assembly authorized a study of the Biblical doctrine of women and ordination.

* * *

Only 30 percent of 2,653 Methodist laymen replying to a survey conducted in Michigan (USA) believe that their denomination should work toward merger with other Protestant groups. However, 51 percent agreed that the Methodist Church should work with other denominations through councils of churches. Five percent thought their church should "work independently of other denominations". Twenty-six percent favoured working toward "merger with denominations having similar forms of church government", and three percent favoured such efforts with "denominations having different forms of church government".

* * *

Dr. James Kelly of Kilmacolm, Scotland, chairman of the British Committee of the World Council of Christian Education and Sunday School Association, was named in the Queen's Birthday Honour List in Britain on June 10, as having been awarded the status of an "Officer of the British Empire" (OBE) for services to the WCCESSA. Dr. Kelly has been associated with the Council for more than forty years. He served it as General Secretary for twenty years (1928-48).

EPS, Geneva

Document

Following is the text of the statement on Angola issued by the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches is deeply disturbed at the reports it has received regarding the present tragedy in Angola.

It (1) deplores the mounting evidence of a rapidly deteriorating situation as a result of which large numbers of Angolans are being deprived of life and liberty;

(2) appeals to the government of Portugal in the name of humanity and of the Christian principles so long professed in Portugal, to refrain from deliberate action involving the death and maiming of thousands of Africans, including women and children, and the attack on those with education and gifts of leadership, as well as the widespread destruction of property;

(3) is convinced that by its present policy the government will inevitably forfeit the sympathy and respect of other nations concerned for the welfare of Africa and its people;

(4) associates itself with the statement issued by the officers of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs on 5 June, 1961, which drew attention to the need to apply in Angola the principle of self-determination and the need for the rapid training of indigenous leadership and the establishment of the rule of law;

(5) requests the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs to make representation accordingly to the Portuguese government and at its discretion to the Commission recently appointed by the UN;

(6) notes that already the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees has sent aid to the tens of thousands of Angolan refugees now in the Congo, and requests the Division to continue and extend this operation;

(7) requests member churches, of whose deep concern it has been made aware, to press upon their governments the urgency of the situation, and to remember constantly in prayer their fellow Christians in both Portugal and her overseas provinces and all those involved in the present emergency.

Adopted unanimously.

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